

Remarks:

1. Claim Objections:

Applicant has revised Claims 4 and 6 to replace references to “wiping element” with “wiper element”. Counsel for Applicant inadvertently carried over the term “wiping element” from a previous draft version of the subject claims. Applicant agrees that the subject references were incorrect and, accordingly, has amended the subject claims to eliminate the basis for such claim objections.

2. 35 USC § 102(b) Claim Rejection:

Applicant respectfully disagrees that Claims 1-5 as originally presented are anticipated by Haggard (U.S. RE. 32,085). Notably, the claimed invention is a *single* structure (that is, a resilient wiper element). Haggard clearly discloses resilient wiper elements, but there is no disclosure whatsoever in Haggard of said wiper elements having rigid areas.

Applicant respectfully asserts that the Examiner’s reliance on washers 52 and 54 of Haggard as constituting “rigid areas” is misplaced. Washers 52 and 54 of Haggard are totally separate structural elements from said resilient wiper elements. Such washers are not a part of the wiper elements themselves. By contrast, the rigid section of the wiper element in the present application is actually a part of the wiper element itself. This distinction is critical because the washers of Haggard act on the wiper element to flatten said wiper element, while the rigid areas of the present invention actually serve to resist such forces and prevent such flattening.

In order to clarify this concept, Applicant has amended Claims 1 and 2 to change the term “rigid area” to “rigid member”. Applicant believes that this amendment clarifies the concept that

the rigid section is a part of the resilient wiper element itself, and not a separate structure such as the washers of Haggard.

Because independent Claim 1, as amended, is not anticipated by Haggard, it is respectfully asserted that dependent Claims 2-5 should also be allowed.

3. 35 USC § 103 Claim Rejection:

Applicant respectfully asserts that the washers described in Haggard are used for a totally different purpose than the molded washer described in Claim 6 of the present application. In Haggard, the washers act as a buffer between the resilient wiper members and tubular spacers of the Haggard device. Said washers prevent said tubular spacer members from coming into direct contact with the portions of the resilient elements near the central opening of said elements. Further, said washers can also act as sacrificial wear elements, as noted at Col. 7, Lines 37-43:

In the event it is desired to replace wear prone parts, such as the wiper members 48, 50, 48a and 50a, the fishing/retainer head 58 is removed, the worn or damaged wiper members, washers, and spacer, slid off and replacements reassembled on the upper portion 24 of the mandrel 16 and the fishing/retainer head 58 replaced, as previously described.

By contrast, the integrally molded washer set forth in Claim 6 of the present invention is designed to provide rigidity to the wiper element itself. Such rigidity prevents the flattening effect on the wiper elements, and provides structural integrity around the central bore of said wiper element - both of which allow the wiper element to resist tearing. This is supported by the specification on Page 9, Lines 6-17 which provides:

FIGURE 4 depicts a cross sectional view of resilient wiper element 30 of the present invention along line 3-3 of FIGURE 3. Central bore 35 extends through said resilient wiper element 30. Peripheral wiping edges 31 and 32 extend outward from central bore 35. Rigid area 36 surrounds said central bore 35, providing rigidity and structural reinforcement to said central bore. In the

preferred embodiment, said rigid area is formed by washer 37 which is molded into said resilient wiper element.

Rigid area 36 provides strength against compressive forces exerted on the resilient wiper element by spacers, such as spacers 15, 16, 17 and 18 depicted on FIGURE 1. Specifically, said rigid area 36 prevents against flattening of said resilient wiper elements in the vicinity of central bore 35, thereby reducing or eliminating gouging or cutting of said resilient wiper elements by such spacers. As a result, resilient wiper elements 30 are much less likely to tear or break apart during normal use. (Emphasis added)

The integrally molded washer of Claim 6 does not perform the same function as the washers described in Haggard. In fact, the washer disclosed in the present application actually diminishes the negative (flattening) effects caused by the washers disclosed in Haggard, thereby protecting the wiper elements from gouging or breaking. Thus, it would not have been obvious to integrally mold the washer in the wiper element, since the washer performs a totally different function that the washers of Haggard.

For the aforementioned reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that Claims 1-6, as amended, should be allowed.

The Examiner is respectfully invited to contact Applicant's representative, Ted M. Anthony, by telephone at (337) 262-9000 or facsimile at (337) 262-9001, if the Examiner has any questions concerning the subject application or this response.

Respectfully submitted:

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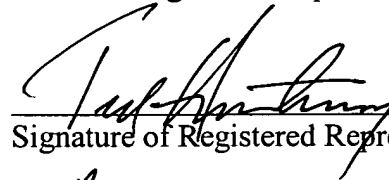


CERTIFICATE OF MAILING PURSUANT TO 37 CFR 1.8

I HEREBY CERTIFY that this Response to First Office Action is this day being deposited with the United States Postal Service, as first class mail, with proper postage affixed, in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P. O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on April 12, 2006 (date of deposit).

TED M. ANTHONY

Name of Registered Representative



Signature of Registered Representative

April 12, 2006

Date of Signature